UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

Student Composers Concert

Tuesday, October 14th, 2025 at 7:30pm | Walter Hall, 80 Queen's Park

PROGRAM

Mind Poop Supercut

Ashley Renee Seward

Prelude

Houtian Zhong

Houtian Zhong, *piano*

Nocturne: Grey and Gold, Westminster Bridge

Matthew Woolard

Matthew Woolard, *piano*; Anwen Robertson, *flute*

SELF PORTRAIT

Kelsea Hopkins

Jordan Sirvin, *double bass*

Intermission

Glimmers

Audrey Sung

Amy Lee, *piano*

Nguay mua mian nui (Harvest season on the mountain villages)

Ken Bui

Nguyen Bui, *piano*

Silver

Pari Bahrami Asl

Eve Channell, *soprano*; Julia Hrelja, *piano*; Hasselhoff Chen, *cello*

Intangible Phantom

Fu Xuan

Vincent Poon, *violin*; Oscar Hodgson, *piano*

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

As part of the Faculty's commitment to improving Indigenous inclusion, we call upon all members of our community to start/continue their personal journeys towards understanding and acknowledging Indigenous peoples' histories, truths and cultures.
Visit indigenous.utoronto.ca to learn more.

PROGRAM NOTES

Mind Poop Supercut

Mind Poop Supercut combines several unrelated audio cues into a YouTube Poop-inspired maelstrom of fart jokes, video game lore, nu-metal karaoke, and early-aughts political angst. In creating Mind Poop Supercut, I tried to reflect the jumbled, cross-referential, and fixative patterns of my own neurodiverse thinking – and somehow, underneath everything, it's also a twelve-tone composition which references multiple musical styles. Mind Poop Supercut holds the serious and the ridiculous in its hands and asks whether their differences matter in an age where every sound, image, and idea is melted down and subsumed into content for a homogenizing media ecosystem controlled by reactionary political elements. It's a wonder I get anything done.

Prelude

This piano composition, Prelude, unfolds in a clear ABA form, contrasting two distinct musical characters. The opening A section is lively and hopeful, with energetic rhythms conveying a sense of aspiration. It then gives way to the second section, where the opening drive is replaced by an inward nostalgia. The harmonies and melodies draw the listener into a different musical world, as if looking back on distant memories. When the A section returns, its brightness feels renewed, now carrying the weight of what has been remembered. As a whole, this piece journeys through optimistic aspirations and poignant memories before finally returning with a renewed sense of hope and confidence.

Nocturne: Grey and Gold, Westminster Bridge

The inspiration for this piece is the late nineteenth century painting, Westminster Bridge, by James Abbott McNeill Whistler, which is currently displayed at the Burrell Collection in Glasgow, Scotland. It features the Thames River on a summer night. The overall dark hazy appearance with a glimmer of lights reflecting on the still water is very intriguing. The viewer needs to take time to look deeply into the blurred image to realize and interpret the actual subject matter. This piece of music was written to create a musical representation of the painting, evoking the impressions of emptiness, darkness, and lack of detail, with the occasional spark of light through the murkiness.

SELF PORTRAIT

SELF PORTRAIT is built from a cryptogram of my last name, expanded through improvisation. The performance was later transcribed with only minor adjustments, allowing the score to preserve the immediacy of the original session. The piece explores whether language, translated directly into music through cryptogram conversion with ensuing spontaneous musical contradiction, can reveal something inherent about its source- much like a palm reading or personality test might.

Glimmers

Glimmers, written in 2025 for solo piano, depicts the shiny and bright surfaces of Lake Ontario. It uses harmony inspired by Erik Satie's Gymnopédie no. 1 to convey a fluid and undulating feeling.

Nguay mua mian nui (Harvest season on the mountain villages)

The piece was written based on inspiration from Vietnamese's Tay Nguyen Mountain villages, from the West side of Vietnam, folk dances; therefore, the music is a little more percussive than being pianistic. The mode used in the piece is also the traditional mode in the area, which is a variation from the pentatonic scale. It will be presented from the very first bar of the music. On the other hand, the left-hand accompaniment is a whole tone scale to balance the big gaps in the traditional mode on the right hand.

Silver

Walter de la Mare (1873–1956) was an English poet and novelist celebrated for evoking mystery and dreamlike beauty in simple, lyrical language. His poetry often reflects a childlike wonder at the natural world, tinged with an otherworldly or haunting quality. This art song, Silver, sets de la Mare's poem of the same name. It seeks to capture the poem's stillness and luminous atmosphere, giving musical voice to its imagery of hushed night and the quiet transformations brought by moonlight.

Intangible Phantom

A fleeting echo of memory drifts through shadowed time. This piece conjures the delicate ache of what once was, now just out of reach.

COMPOSER BIOGRAPHIES

Ashley Renee Seward is a composer living and working in so-called Toronto, Canada. Ashley exists in spaces between genres, genders, niches, and social-hierarchical positionalities and illuminates these tensions in her music. Ashley has written music for the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Standing Wave Ensemble, Allegra Chamber Orchestra, and the

Kensington Sinfonia, among others. When not composing, Ashley likes to play video games and plan out her Magic: The Gathering decks.

Houtian Zhong is a second-year composition student from Victoria, BC. In 2021, he attained RCM Associate Diploma in Piano Performance. He is also the RCM National Gold Medalist for Level 10 Piano in 2020. He has experimented with music composition ranging from single instrumentation to full orchestra. He has also won awards in the Murray Adaskin Composition Competition, the Greater Victoria Performing Arts Festival, the BC Student Composer Competition, and the national CFMTA Student Composer Competition over the years 2018 - 2023. His works have been performed by professional groups such as the Victoria Symphony, Victoria Conservatory of Music Senior Collegium, Westshore Chamber Music, and the Springdale Trio. His favourite composers are Beethoven, Mahler, Tchaikovsky, and Brahms.

Matthew Woolard is currently enjoying his fourth year in the Bachelor of Music Program with a Major in Composition at the University of Toronto. His current Composition Instructor is Dr. Roger Bergs. He has also been instructed by Andrew Clark. Matthew's long term mentor is Professor Larysa Kuzmenko. In 2025, he was awarded the Gwendolen M. Grant Scholarship. In 2024, he was awarded the Jean A. Chalmers Scholarship and the Sotherton Wadhams In-Course Scholarship. In 2023, he was awarded the Arthur Plettner Scholarship and the Joseph Alfred Whealy In-Course Scholarship. Matthew completed his ARCT Diploma from the Royal Conservatory of Music in 2021, achieving First Class Honours with Distinction. His primary instrument is the piano, with his university instructor being Dr. Emily Chiang. He also plays the trumpet for his own enjoyment. Matthew's hometown is Burlington, Ontario.

Kelsea Hopkins is a Canadian-Filipino composer, double bassist, and music teacher currently based in Toronto. Her work leverages sound-based symbolism to engage listeners on an instinctive level, drawing on multi-disciplinary approaches to music inspired by her biracial identity and lived experiences. Hopkins has collaborated with a wide range of performers and ensembles, including members of the Capital Chamber Choir, the University of Ottawa Symphony Orchestra, and the Her Endangered Melody Project based at the Royal Northern College of Music. In 2023, she received a SOCAN Canadian Composer Award for her piece biographical sounds (2023) for mixed ensemble, a work that explores genre fluidity and storytelling. Her compositions have also been recognized by the University of Toronto, the University of Ottawa, the Icarus Quartet, and the Domaine Forget de Charlevoix. Her portfolio features works for double bass, string orchestra, wind quintet, saxophone quartet, and mixed ensembles.

Hoi Ching (Audrey) Sung is in the second year of a BMus in Interdisciplinary Music Studies with a minor in Composition, studying with James Lowrie. Her music has been played by the Unionville High School Orchestra. In 2024, Audrey was awarded both the Arthur Plettner Scholarship and the Richard lorweth Thurman Jazz Scholarship. As a violinist, Audrey has played with the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra, University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Cathedral Bluff Symphony Orchestra.

Nguyen Bui (or Ken) is a Vietnamese composer who is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Music degree at University of Toronto, Canada, under the direction of teacher Dinh Lang Tran, Matt Brubeck, James Lowrie. His music is inspired by a lot of classical composer like Mozart, Beethoven, Debussy, Stravinsky,... and it is also from his love with nature. Starting to write music from the age of 10, he has hundreds of composition for piano solo, and a lot of chamber music.

Pari Bahrami is a composer and musician based in Canada, originally from Iran. Growing up immersed in the rich cultural heritage of her homeland, she developed a deep connection to music from an early age, particularly through her study of the piano. Her passion for music led her to pursue higher education in composition at the University of Toronto. Her compositions and performances reflect a deep commitment to exploring the expressive possibilities of diverse musical forms. Her work has been performed by ensembles around the world, showcasing her unique voice and artistic vision.

Xuan Fu studied composition at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. His works “Great Desert Road” and “Spirituality” have premiered at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music Chinese Symphony Orchestra; the arranged work “Guang Ling San”（with the collaboration of “Wing of String” Chinese string orchestra）has been performed on the 38th Shanghai Spring International Music Festival and other events. He is now studying with Christos Hatzis.